



Hellenic Republic
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL COHESION AND FAMILY
General Secretariat for Social Solidarity
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"Observations on the Memorandum of the Council of Europe Commissioner's Visit to Greece (3–7 February 2025) Concerning the Human Rights Situation of Roma"

Greece acknowledges and appreciates the Commissioner's recommendations concerning the human rights situation of Roma communities. The Greek authorities are committed to promoting social inclusion and equal rights for all, and reaffirm their dedication to the effective implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma 2021–2030.

Significant steps are being taken to improve access to adequate housing, healthcare, education, and employment, as well as to strengthen coordination across all levels of government.

Greece upholds a zero-tolerance approach to any form of discrimination, hate speech, or police misconduct, and continues to strengthen human rights training for law enforcement and the judiciary

Efforts are also underway to enhance data collection, address anti-Roma stereotypes and discrimination, ensure accountability in law enforcement, and support the work of the Ombudsman.

Greece will continue to work closely with relevant institutions, civil society, and Roma communities to implement these recommendations and to fulfil its human rights obligations in line with national and international standards.

Roma in Greece

Roma people do not constitute a minority in Greece. They form an integral part of the Greek population and as Greek citizens they fall within the Constitution and the laws of the Greek State. Subsequently, they fully enjoy all civil and political rights entitled to Greek citizens, having the ability to enjoy all economic, social and cultural rights safeguarded for Greek citizens. However, poor living conditions, poverty and social exclusion define Roma as a social vulnerable group, for which the state takes special measures in order to create the necessary conditions for their social inclusion and prosperity.

The latest update of Roma settlements and population mapping was carried out in 2021 by the General Secretariat of Social Solidarity and Fight Against Poverty, with the participation of the Municipalities to achieve the collection of more qualitative and quantitative data. The latest 2021 mapping results identified a total population of **Roma amounting to 117.495 and constituting 1.13%** of the permanent population of the country. There are 462 Roma living areas, including 266 settlements and 196 scattered households (individual or in groups). Higher percentages of concentration are observed in the Regions of Attica (25%), Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (17%), Thessaly (14%), Western Greece (13%). The number of Roma living in segregated housing amounts to 12.216, while Settlements Type I: "Degraded settlements" exist in 77 areas in Greece. Deficiencies in infrastructure are reported in sewage, water supply, electricity supply and road network mostly in type I and II living areas.

The National Strategy and Action Plan for Roma Social Inclusion 2021-2030 in accordance with the guidelines and priorities set in the European Framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation. The issues of housing and improvement of living conditions in Roma settlements at local level, raising access of Roma population to healthcare, education and employment, as well as the promotion of equal social, political, economic participation and combating Roma stereotypes and discrimination are main issues of concern.

The NRIS 2021 - 2030 has been compiled through a long participatory process, involving all relevant ministries and stakeholders, as well as Roma representatives in a structured consultation process. It sets four (4) pillars, which reflect the national priorities and strategic goals, policy measures and actions at national, regional and local level, in the areas of fighting poverty and social exclusion as well as equal access to housing, healthcare, education and skills development, social care and employment, especially for the disadvantaged Roma children, youngsters and women.

- **PILLAR I. "Prevention and fight against Roma poverty and social exclusion"**
- **PILLAR II. "Enhancing equal access of Roma to basic services and goods (education, employment, health, social care and housing)"**
- **PILLAR III. "Preventing and combating stereotypes and discrimination against Roma"**
- **PILLAR IV. "Promoting the active participation of Roma in social, economic and political life".**

The overall strategy and action plan sets measurable indicators is complemented by a monitoring mechanism, so as to enable the continuous evaluation of the achievements and the necessary adjustments of the actions. The monitoring and evaluation mechanism is being updated, according to the data available and after cooperation and consultation with the relevant bodies and Roma representatives. The System of indicators for monitoring and assessment of the NRIS 2021 – 2030 action plan implementation:

- is based on the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) portfolio of indicators
- is developed in consultation with stakeholders involved
- sets headline & sectoral Indicators aligned with the NRIS
- identifies procedures and mechanisms for setting up a documentation system
- enables the monitoring and evaluation of the progress / impact assessment of policy measures for Roma social inclusion.

The NRIS 2021 - 2030 places **particular emphasis on policies and mainstream as well as targeted actions to support Roma development, well-being and social participation in local communities.** It also ensures the systematic consultation and participation of Roma representatives, including Roma youth and women, in key bodies implementing the strategy (e.g. Advisory Committee, Roma Forum etc.) and at all levels of planning, implementation and monitoring of the relevant interventions until 2030.

In the framework of the Strategy important committees have been established, promoting effective coordination of all involved Ministries and bodies of the central government, regarding the effective implementation of Roma social inclusion measures and enable strategic planning, systematic monitoring and evaluation of the NRIS 2021-2030. More specifically:

- the Governmental Committee for Roma Social Inclusion has been established in 2022 with the participation of Secretary Generals from all the competent ministries (the General Secretary for Social Solidarity is the Chair). Its scope is to coordinate the implementation and revision of the policies provided for in the Strategy.
- the Advisory Committee for Roma Social Inclusion consists of representatives of all co-competent ministries and bodies as well as from Roma representatives. Its scope is to provide expertise and advise to the Governmental Committee on issues related to Roma social inclusion.
- the Local Government Political Committee for Roma Social Inclusion has been established by the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece (K.E.D.E.) with the participation of Mayors or Deputy Mayors from areas with high concentrations of Roma. Its purpose is the exchange of know-how and practices and the promotion of synergies and special interventions in key local issues for Roma social inclusion as well as dealing with urban-municipal issues contributing to the formulation of relevant policies and measures. In addition, the committee contributes to the monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of the local action plans and implemented interventions, as well as the identification of new needs within the framework of the pillars, operational objectives, measures and actions of NRIS 2021 – 2030 at the local level.

Holistic approach/ Indicative actions included in the National Strategy and Action Plan for Roma Social Inclusion 2021-2030 are:

□ **Roma Inclusion services in Municipalities** - Roma Branches contribution to the social inclusion of Roma at local and regional level is considered particularly important. 66 Roma Branches have been established in Community Centers of Municipalities hosting significant rates of Roma. They provide reception, support and interconnection services at local level, as well as individualized support to Roma in all fields of social integration (access to primary healthcare, school enrolment and attendance, registration in the PES unemployment register /unemployment cards and application for receiving social benefits, such as Minimum Guarantee Income (GMI), Child Benefit, distribution of food and basic goods (Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). A total of 323 employees are assigned to work in Roma inclusion in the 66 Roma Branches, while 10 Municipalities have assigned at least one employee dealing with issues of Roma social integration in the Community Centers or Social Service. Roma are offered counseling and psychological support, primary health care services and targeted actions for education, school dropout and language literacy, as well as actions to promote their employment integration and social inclusion. **According to latest 2023 data Roma served in Roma Branches reached 61.470 (52,32% of the total Roma population). The Roma mediators play a key role in the smooth operation of the Roma branches of the Community Centers**, acting as a liaison between the local Roma communities and the Community Centers.

Social benefits such as Minimum Guaranteed Income and child benefit (A21) are linked to continuing school attendance, serving as a motivation measure to enhance Roma participation at school. According to the data from the “My School” information system of the Ministry of Education there is a continuous increase in the participation of Roma in education, mainly in primary and preschool. From a total of 15.834 students in 2021-2022, reached 19.405 in 2023-2024. Despite this, the continuation of Roma in secondary education as well as in technical vocational education remains low.

□ **Integrated Local Action Plans by Municipalities –holistic approach/ Connection with the Regional Operational Programs 2021-2027 actions:**

The Municipalities, based on the principle of proximity and subsidiarity and according to the relevant legal framework, hold the responsibility to design and implement Local Action Plans for Roma social inclusion, taking into account the local needs and in cooperation with local stakeholders, including Roma organizations and civil society. The aim of the Local Action Plans is to strengthen the participation of the Roma in all aspects of social inclusion (education, employment, health care, improvement of living conditions, combat discrimination and stereotypes, equal involvement in the local communities) utilizing mainstream and targeted empowerment and social innovation actions. 85 Municipalities have already submitted LAPs in a total of 142 Municipalities hosting Roma. The LAPs are evaluated according to specific criteria, namely their relevant to NRIS pillars and goals, the implementation of consultation processes with local Roma communities/ organizations (mandatory procedure), their compatibility with planned actions of the new NSRF Regional Plans 2021-2027 (EKT+, ERDF etc.) and the willing to establish a new Roma Branch in Communities Centers, where needed.

The NRIS 2021 - 2030 foresees targeted actions to support Roma social inclusion as well as equal access to mainstream services, benefits and actions targeted to vulnerable citizens and the general population. There are several actions targeted to Roma, mainly funded through the combination of ESF+/ERDF funds. In the current MFF, there are **9 Sectoral and 13 Regional Operational Programs. In the framework of the 13 Regional Programs 2021-2027**, actions have been foreseen under the:

- ESF+ Specific Objective ESO4.10: “Promoting the socio-economic inclusion of marginalised communities such as Roma”.
- ERDF/ Specific Objective 4.3. Promoting the socio-economic inclusion of marginalized communities, low-income households and disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities, through integrated actions including housing and social services or Specific Objective 4.5 “Ensure equitable access to healthcare and strengthen the resilience of health systems, including primary healthcare, and promote the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care”.

The actions foreseen for funding, following the development of relevant Roma inclusion Local Action Plans by Municipalities, may include:

- New business initiatives by Self-Employed youth aged 20 to 44, who belong to marginalized social groups, such as the Roma
- Job placements for marginalized social groups, such as the Roma
- Integrated programs for Roma inclusion in the labor market and combating digital exclusion (including counseling & training services, rent subsidy, awareness raising of Roma and the wider community)
- Support actions to improve Roma living conditions (Establishment of management teams for relocation sites and for the improvement of living conditions actions)
- Development of interventions to support Roma infants, school-age children/adolescents in experiential workshops and children's camps
- Capacity building for local Roma Organizations and Civil Society Bodies
- Establishment of a new Roma Branch within Municipal Community Centers (where not exist).
- Infrastructure interventions to improve the living conditions of Roma at the local level.

☐ **Temporary Relocations & Improvement of Living Conditions**

All actions follow the Legislative framework already in place for the transitory relocation of Special Social Groups (Law 4483/2017-OG 107/A/31.07.2017) and Relevant Joint Ministerial Decision for Law Implementation (R.F RO 64/2018 – OG 412/B/12.02.2018) as amended – OG 1924/B/30.05.2018 Joint Ministerial Decision) which sets a number of key preconditions for the implementation of the social housing with respect to the human rights. According to it, municipalities having within their boundaries, Roma settlements of Type I are responsible for

providing their citizens with the basic goods and services for ensuring decent living conditions. Roma that lives in conditions of extreme deprivation should be relocated or enjoy improved living conditions with a view to their gradual and full inclusion in the wider urban and social fabric.

The proposals for housing interventions are prepared and submitted by the municipalities following the preconditions set in the legislative framework and they are evaluated by a specialized Technical Support Team and approved by the inter-ministerial Committee for Temporary Relocation of Special Social Groups, leading to the issuance of a specific Joint Ministerial Decision for each relocation or action for the improvement of living conditions.

- In May 2023, the Joint Ministerial Decision No. 49453 "Approval for the creation of an Organized Temporary Relocation Site for Vulnerable Social Groups in the **Municipality of Ampelokipi – Menemeni** has been issued.
- Publication of the Joint Ministerial Decision No. 123/11-2-2025 / Government Gazette B' 504 "Approval for the establishment of an Organized Temporary Relocation Site for Vulnerable Social Groups at the location 'Dyo Aorakia', Nea Alikarnassos, in the Municipality of Heraklion, Region of Crete."
- The **Municipality of Kalamata** has recently submitted a proposal for a Temporary Relocation of Special Social Groups Roma in the area of Birbita, which will be examined by the Temporary Relocation Committee.

Open Call "Temporary Relocation, Development, Replacement and/or Expansion of Infrastructure Networks to Improve the Living Conditions of Special Social Groups (Roma)

A new targeted call based on the article 159 of Law 4483/2017 has been announced by the Ministry of Interior in 2023 addressed to Municipalities regarding "Temporary Relocation Development, Replacement and/or Expansion of Networks of Infrastructure for the Improvement of Living Conditions of Special Social Groups (Roma)" **with an initial total budget amounting to 15.000.500,00€**. The funding concerns the improvement of Roma living conditions in order to achieve their social integration:

- Action 1 – "Organized Temporary Spaces Relocation" either through the creation of "Organised Places of Temporary Relocation" (budget up to €3,500,000.00 per Municipality request)**, which are organized as a single complex of social housing units with the required prefabricated facilities, the required infrastructure (sewage, water supply, road construction, electric lighting, collection waste, etc.), as well as any other supporting facilities for healthy and safe living. **For Action I, the Municipality of Ampelokipi – Menemeni** have submitted a proposal for funding following the Temporary Relocation Ministerial Decision for (Government Gazette 3210/A'/16.05.2023) which is under evaluation for approval.
- Action 2 – "Development, replacement and/or extension of networks infrastructure for the Improvement of Living Conditions" (budget up to €1,750,000.00 per Municipality request)** for the development, replacement and/or improvement of infrastructure networks (e.g. sewage network, rainwater, transportation network, etc.) with the aim of improving the living conditions of the beneficiary Roma population in the places where they live. **For Action II, the Municipalities of Lokri - Larissa - Trikala – Delta – Orestiada - Ioannina - Messini and Xanthi** received funding approval.

The submission of applications by Municipalities started from 01/03/2023 and run until 31/12/2025. **The total budget of the action has been now increased to 18.048.500,00.**

In February 2025, with the support of the local Roma Branch, **the Agioi Apostoloi settlement in the Municipality of Rhodes was officially closed**. This marks a notable example of good practice and highlights the long-term efforts required for such an initiative.

The settlement was originally established in 1980 and had housed approximately 100 individuals. According to the 2017 mapping, 13 families comprising 61 individuals were recorded, primarily working in trade and construction. By 2021, the number had declined to 11 households with a total of 34 individuals. **Employment patterns among the Roma shifted during the COVID-19 pandemic, largely due to labour shortages in the tourism sector.** Many began working seasonally in hotels, restaurants, and related businesses during the summer, while relying on unemployment benefits and social assistance during the winter months.

The support provided by the Roma Branch Office played a crucial role in promoting social integration through access to housing, employment programs, and welfare benefits. As of August 2024, two households with a total of four members—registered residents of Rhodes—were recorded, along with two additional households (five individuals in total) who had temporarily relocated from other regions of Greece for seasonal employment, making use of the vacant shelters during the summer period. Following the end of the tourist season, **one of the permanent households (two members) relocated to rented accommodation with the support of housing benefits.** The remaining household—comprising one member still residing in the settlement and another currently incarcerated—was enrolled in the **“Housing and Work for the Homeless III” program**, which will provide assistance in securing rental housing.

Human Rights protection

The fight against discrimination and stereotypes toward Roma is a distinct pillar within the National Strategy for Roma inclusion. The Ombudsman, the National Commission for Human Rights (EEDA) as well as are represented in the Advisory Committee for the Social Inclusion of Roma, established under the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Poverty Reduction as part of the National Strategy.

The Hellenic Police Departments and Offices for Combating Racist Violence were established in 2012 and began operating on 10 January 2013. Their mission has been to investigate and prosecute offenses committed against individuals or groups of individuals solely on the grounds of their race, national or ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

The Hellenic Police have enhanced the electronic registration and identification of racist violence offences, including the documentation of bias motivations. A standardized methodology for recording racially motivated crimes has been established. Relevant statistical data are regularly submitted to the Ministry of Justice to update the official database.

Law 5187/2025 (Government Gazette A 48 – 21.03.2025) “Reorganization of the structure of the Hellenic Police and upgrade of the training of its uniformed personnel” establishes the **Directorate of Social Policing (D.S.P.)** responsible for the design and implementation of actions aimed at preventing and addressing racism and intolerance, school bullying, all forms of interpersonal violence—particularly domestic and gender-based violence—sexual harassment and abuse. It is also responsible for planning and implementing actions to protect human rights, the rights of minors and persons with disabilities, as well as vulnerable groups, while supporting victims and preventing their secondary victimisation.

Training and retraining on hate crimes, hate speech, human rights, and related issues is a high priority. Numerous training programs have been designed and implemented with support from

the Hellenic Police, NGOs, public authorities, the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training, the Council of Europe, and others. These initiatives aim to enhance the expertise of police personnel and improve the quality of services provided to citizens.

Further actions to Support of Roma NRIS 2021 -2030

The implementation of the National Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma 2021–2030 shows progress but also significant challenges, especially in coordination across sectors and active engagement of local authorities (municipalities). Key priorities for the next two years include strengthening local action plans based on reliable data, improving access to education, housing, and healthcare, and empowering Roma communities—particularly youth and women. Effective inclusion requires enhanced inter-agency collaboration, evidence-based planning, and meaningful participation of Roma in decision-making.

The National Contact Point for Roma Social Inclusion is implementing the initiative "National Platform 'For Roma with Roma'" for the period 2024–2025, with a duration of 24 months (from June 1, 2023, to May 31, 2025) and a total budget of €195,938.00. The project includes the update of Roma mapping at national, regional, and local levels, through the redesign and update of the Roma Database available at <https://egroma.gov.gr>. It also involves the pilot implementation of the Indicator System of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy (NRIS) 2021–2030, through a dedicated data collection survey. In parallel, a sample survey is being conducted to gather data on education levels, health, participation in education, school attendance and dropout rates, current occupation and employment characteristics, access to social benefits, and the presence of disabilities. As part of awareness-raising efforts, videos promoting positive Roma role models are being produced. The initiative further includes the organization of meetings, consultations, and events at national, regional, and local levels, addressing the horizontal and sectoral priorities of the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion. Lastly, transnational cooperation actions are being carried out in collaboration with other National Roma Platforms, fostering the exchange of good practices and know-how.

Further Actions in specialization phase:

- **Technical Assistance and Support of Local Government Beneficiaries (Municipalities Capacity building)** - Funding: O.P. "Technical Assistance and Support to Beneficiaries" 2021-2027- PRIORITY AXIS 5 - STRENGTHENING OF ESF+ ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY.
- **Register of Roma Social Mediators / Development of Occupational Profile, Training and certification of 1,100 Roma Social Mediators** (Funding: ESF+ O.P. Human Resources and Social Cohesion 2021 – 2027) PRIORITY 1 - SYSTEMATIC / HORIZONTAL INTERVENTIONS
- **"Development of support interventions for infants (2.5-4 years old), children (4-12 years old), school-age teenagers and parents in experiential workshops and children's camps"** Funding: ESF+ (Regional Programs 2021-2027)